

March 26, 1984

LB 112

the money they need to provide food on the table, that they are able to care for themselves while they are pregnant. It is a fact that there are still people falling through the cracks despite the other programs that we have. This has led to high infant mortality rate in our state and in our nation compared to our European countries that are similar in terms of their development stage. It seems clear to me that we are not doing the job as completely as we should and LB 112 tries to deal with that. If we are going to care for people, we need to care for them when they are young, when they are children, when they are pregnant because that is where the money is best spent and has the best return. Senator Kahle talked about, well, this isn't the role of government. In fact as I have shown you time and again, this Legislature has recognized the role of our state in caring for these children. Why is it that we care for these children? Why do we provide this assistance to make sure their needs are met? The reason is simple. Because, if we don't do it now we will pay for it later. If these children are not cared for, if these high-risk pregnancies end up with disabilities, such as retardation, it is the state's responsibility to take care for those children for many, many years in the future. Those retarded children or otherwise disabled children are a state responsibility. We recognized that for many, many years and the expense of caring for those children after the fact is far more costly than the expense of taking care of those mothers with the high-risk pregnancies at the first sign of trouble. That is the cost benefit ratio that I think is there with LB 112. I think it is a modest proposal that Senator Johnson is proposing. I think we are going to see how it works and we can deal with adjustments in the future. But to maintain consistency, to maintain concern for our children, LB 112 is a bill we ought to support and see enacted this session.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Goodrich and then Senator Marsh, Senator Landis, Senator Fenger, Senator Hoagland, Senator Schmit, Senator Goodrich.

SENATOR GOODRICH: Mr. President, members of the body, I don't very often stand on the floor and talk, as you know, but in this particular case, I am going to stand up and I'm